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**THE IMPACT OF MOTHER TONGUE ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE AT BEGGINNER LEVELS**

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orientação da Dra. Maria Cândida Gonçalves.

## **O Júri**

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This work is dedicated to my dear mother

**Maria Gomes Soares Silva,**

the most beautiful and important person  
in my life. “I love you Mum”.

## **ABSTRACT**

The present study examines the influence that Creole has on Capeverdean students' learning English as a foreign language.

The contrastive analysis of some structures of Creole and English shows that there are some grammar similarities and some differences between the two languages. The research carried out shows that the differences exert a negative influence on students' learning English as a foreign language at beginner level.

The findings of this study and some recommendations are presented at the end of this paper with a view to helping teachers who want to know the main negative transfer of grammar of Creole into English and to know how to diminish this problem and implement more effective teaching and learning.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ALUPEC** – Alfabeto Unificado Para a Escrita do Crioulo

**Fl** – Foreign Language

**ELT** – English Language Teaching

**L1** – First Language

**L2** – Second Language

**Mt** – Mother Tongue



## INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is a growing need in this age of globalization. Through another language, we can speak with people from around the world. However, since people express themselves best in their mother tongue, they are faced with challenges of learning foreign languages.

In Cape Verde teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task. When teachers teach a new language outside of its original context, they are often faced with a lack of adequate published materials that would help to enhance fluent writing in the target language. The problem of lack of materials is only one of the many problems that have a negative impact on the learning of a foreign language. The situation becomes worse when students do not have sufficient opportunities for speaking, listening and writing the target language. Some teachers usually use Portuguese or Creole as the medium of instruction in the classroom, further diminishing students' exposure to the target language. Time spent speaking the native language and the target language is not proportional since the native language dominates at home and in some cases in the classrooms.

These challenges among others are constantly addressed by teachers as they try to increase their awareness and avail themselves of resources, thus improving their teaching skills. However the challenges of mother tongue interference continues to be a serious problem.

In this context this paper will focus on the problems that both students and teachers face due to mother tongue interference. This paper attempts to address this problem by asking: *What is the impact of the mother tongue on learning English as a foreign language?*

In order to answer this question, I conducted a study following the steps described below.

Through literature review I tried to clarify the concepts of *mother tongue*, *second language*, *foreign language*, and *language transfer and interference*. This is the object of Chapter I.

Some behaviorist theories of language transfer are presented in Chapter II.

In the following chapter, i.e., Chapter III a contrastive analysis of some structures of Creole and English is carried out. This analysis provided useful information about some types of errors that Creole speaking learners may make when learning English.

Taking as the starting point the ideas discussed in the previous chapters, I designed and conducted a research study on the influence of some Creole structures on English language learning at beginner/elementary levels. This study was conducted on the Island of S. Nicolau of Cape Verde. The final chapter of this paper makes recommendations based on the findings of the research.

# CHAPTER I: THE CONCEPTS OF MOTHER TONGUE, SECOND LANGUAGE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE TRANSFER

## 1.1 Mother Tongue, Second Language and Foreign Language

According to Ashworth (1992), *mother tongue or native language* is the language which the person acquires in early years and which normally becomes her natural instrument of thought and communication. An online article, entitled “*Mother Tongue*”, defines mother tongue (first language, native language or vernacular) as the language a person learns first. And correspondingly the person is called a native speaker of the language (n.p). The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Skiba, 2000) defines *mother tongue* as one’s native language; the language learned by children and passed from one generation to the next; it is received by birth or from ancestors.

On the other hand, Ashworth (1992) states that the second language is a language acquired by a person in addition to her mother tongue. A similar definition of second language is given by the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language mentioned above as the language you learn and adopt after learning yours.

According to an online article entitled “*Foreign Language*” a foreign language is a language not spoken by the indigenous people of a certain place. It is also a language not spoken in the native country of the person (n.p, n.d).

Some of the authors discussed in this work use the terms *second language* and foreign language interchangeably. However, in this paper they will be used with different meanings for the following reasons:

In Cape Verde, English is an additional language that is learned in school after having acquired the mother tongue and it is not spoken largely outside the classroom.

In fact, in Cape Verde, the role of English outside the classroom is extremely restricted. That is, it is not the language of the Capeverdean community at large. It is spoken by a restrict group of people. Creole is the mother tongue. It is the language that the Capeverdeans learn first, and it is the Capeverdean natural instrument of thought and communication. Although the official language in Cape Verde is Portuguese, Creole is the common language and it is used in everyday communication.

The Portuguese language is the second language learned after Creole and it is officially used outside the classroom. It is not commonly used by all Capeverdean in everyday communication.

Therefore, this paper adopts the following definitions presented by Richards, C. John Platt and H. Platt (1992):

“Foreign language is a language which is not a native language in a country. A foreign language is usually studied either for communication with foreigners who speak the language, or for reading printed materials in the language” and

“native language (usually the language which a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he or she is living.

The native language is often the first language the child acquires...)”.

**First language (L1), mother tongue and native language** and will be used as synonymous.

## 1.2 Transfer

According to Ellis (1999) transfer is the process of using knowledge of the first language in learning a second language, it is negative transfer.

Ormrod (1990) has a different point of view. He agrees that transfer is a part of everyday life: individuals encounter new situations and draw on their previously acquired knowledge and skills to deal with them. In fact, transfer is an essential component of human functioning, so it becomes positive transfer.

For the purpose of this work *transfer* will be considered the same as *interference*. Interference may be viewed as the transference of elements of one language to another (Berthold cited in Ormrod, 1990).

The idea that interference from the foreign language is the major obstacle to foreign language learning was dominant in applied linguistics from the 1940s through the late 1960s. Here is a classic statement of the position:

The basic problem of the foreign language learning arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language themselves, but primarily out of the special “set” created by the foreign language habits (Labo cited in Ellis, 1999, p. 124).

Berthold defines grammatical interference as the first language influencing the second in terms of word order, use of pronouns, articles and so on. Labo cited in Ellis (1999) claims

that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language and it is the major problem in learning the foreign language and there are three interacting factors in the determination of language transfer: (1) a learner's psycho typology, how a learner organizes her NL; (2) perception of NL-TL distance; (3) actual knowledge of the TL.

Theorists distinguish two types of transfer: positive vs. negative. I am going to make a small relationship between positive and negative transfer.

### 1.2.1 Types of Transfer

#### Positive vs. negative transfer

When learning in one situation facilitates learning or performance in another situation, we say that *positive transfer* has occurred. For example learning basic mathematics procedures should facilitate one's ability to balance a checkbook. Learning principles of reinforcement should improve a teacher's ability to modify student behavior.

On the other hand, when something learned in one situation hinders one's ability to learn or perform in a second situation, then *negative transfer* has occurred. Individuals accustomed to driving a standard transmission who then find themselves behind the wheel of an automatic transmission often step on a clutch that isn't there. People who learn a foreign language typically apply patterns of speech production characteristic of their native tongue, thus giving them a foreign accent (Schmidt & Young, 1987).

As long as there is a "common something" among tasks, the possibility of transfer between one task to another exists (Gray & Orasanu, 1987). Let's look at some theories of transfer.

### 1.2.2 Theories of Transfer

How does transfer occur? Below I am going to present a brief overview of theory of transfer before twentieth-century learning theories according to Ormrod's book entitled "*Human Learning –Theories, Principles, and Educational Applications*".

**An Early Behaviorist Theory: Thorndike's Identical Elements:** Edward Thorndike cited in Ormrod (1990) proposed a theory of transfer that emphasized specific transfer: transfer occurs only to the extent that the original and transfer tasks have *identical elements*. In a later study, Thorndike examined the interrelationships of high school students' academic achievement in different curricular areas. Achievement in one subject matter appeared to

facilitate students' achievement in another only when there was some commonality between the two subject matters.

**A Later Behaviorist Perspective: Similarity of Stimuli and Response:** Since Thorndike's work, behaviorist views of transfer have focused on how transfer is affected by stimulus and response characteristics in the original and transfer situations. In general, principles of transfer which have emerged from behaviorist literature (Osgood, cited in Ormrod, 1990) include the following:

- When stimuli and responses are similar in the two situations, maximal positive transfer will occur.
- When stimuli are different and responses are similar, some positive transfer will occur.
- When stimuli are similar and responses are different, negative transfer will occur.

As an example of this last point, Ormrod remembered when he was a high school student when his class schedule included second-period Latin and third-period French. The word for "and" is spelled the same in both languages, but 'et' in French and Latin is pronounced very differently (/et/ in Latin /ay/ in French), hence meeting the conditions for negative transfer (similar stimuli, different responses). On several occasions he uttered the word "et" in French class, he was severely disapproved by his teacher (Ormrod, 1990).

**Human Information Processing Theory:** cognitive psychologists - Brooks cited in Ormrod (1990) are now beginning to develop their own views of how and when transfer occurs. A currently prominent view of transfer is this one: relevant information and skills are transferred to a new situation only when they are retrieved from short-term memory within the context of that new situation. Given the low probability that any particular piece of information will be retrieved, as well as the limited capacity of short-term memory, many potentially relevant pieces of information may very *well not* be transferred in situations in which they would be helpful.

The presence or absence of retrieval cues in the transfer situation determines what relevant information, if any, is retrieved from long-term memory. A new situation is more likely to call to mind previously learned information if the situation and the relevant information are

closely associated in memory. This will happen, for instance, if the new situation was previously anticipated when the new information was stored, so that the situation and information relevant to it were stored in association with each other.

To make it clear I am going to show it in an appropriate Capeverdean context. A Capeverdean English student everyday uses Creole to communicate, it is her long-term memory, and when he tries to communicate in English he uses his first language to tell words that dos not know in the foreign language that is her short-term memory, a language he is not accustomed to. He transfers what he knows from the long-term (Creole) to the short-term (English); the old into the new language.

**Current Views on General Transfer:** current views concerning general transfer are somewhere in between: general transfer is not as common as specific transfer (Gray cited in Ormrod, 1990), but learning occurring at one time *can* facilitate learning at another time if, in the process, the individual *learns how to learn*. Now, let's present some factors that affect the process of transfer.

### 1.2.3 Factors Affecting Transfer

A number of variables are related to the occurrence of transfer. I will consider three of them.

- **The more thoroughly something is learned, the more likely it is to be transferred to a new situation:** there is often a trade-off between instructional time and transfer; the more quickly a topic is covered, the less likely it is to be transferred (Cormier 1987; Ellis, 1999; Gick & Holyoak, 1987). The implications of this finding for educational practice are clear: students should demonstrate thorough mastery of material if they will be expected to apply that information in future situations.
- **The more similar two situations are, the more likely it is that what is learned in one situation will be applied to the other situation:** behaviorists have argued that similarity of either stimuli or responses is necessary for transfer to occur. Cognitivists have proposed instead that because transfer depends on retrieval of relevant information at the appropriate time, the perceived similarity rather than actual similarity of the two situations is

important (Gick & Holyoak, 1987). Either way, one thing is clear: similarity between two situations affects transfer.

- **Numerous and varied examples and opportunities for practice increase the extent to which information and skills will be applied in new situations:** individuals are more likely to transfer something they have learned if they have encountered a wide of examples and practice situations (Cheng at al.,1986; Cormier 1987 cited in Ormrod, 1990). Individuals trained in this fashion store what they have learned in association with many different contexts and will therefore be more likely to retrieve information when they again encounter one of those contexts.

### Summary

This chapter showed that transfer is the process of applying what has been learned in one situation to one's learning or performance in another situation. Several theories of transfer have been proposed. Cognitivists argued that transfer depends on retrieval of relevant information. However, Behaviorists argued, that for transfer to occur it needs to have a stimuli or response.

With these different opinions about transfer and how it occurs I ask: “what is the impact of mother tongue and stimuli/response in learning a foreign language?” and “what are the problems that students face with the interference of L1 into foreign language?” These challenges will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER II: THE BEHAVIORIST LEARNING THEORY AND LANGUAGE TRANSFER

When confronted with something new, whether it is a new food, a different kind of music, or just new information, it is natural instinct to look for similarities with things that are familiar, to try to draw some comparison with what we know already. Consciously or unconsciously, we bring what we know to what we do not, making it impossible to learn anything entirely from scratch.

This is certainly no less true when we set about learning a foreign language. It is not possible to learn a foreign language without relying to some extent on our mother tongue, and the impulse to look for similarities and to draw conclusions based on them is a strong here as in any other learning context. In this context we can see that the most noticeable hurdle that students face is mother interference. So, what is the impact of mother tongue and stimuli/response in learning a foreign language?"

### 2.1. Behaviorist Learning Theory

In order to understand the importance of mother tongue, it is necessary to understand the main tenets of behaviorist learning theory. According to Ellis (1999) up to the end of the 1960s, views of language learning were derived from a theory of learning in general. The dominant school in psychology, which informed most discussions of language learning, was behaviorism and two key notions can be identified in these discussions: 'habits' and 'errors'. The theory of transfer is linked to a particular view of language learning as a series of habits and errors as a consequence of habits.

#### 2.1.1 Habits

Behaviorist psychology set out to explain behavior by observing the responses that took place when particular stimuli were present. Different stimuli produced different responses from a learner. These responses could be haphazard, or they can be regular.

The association of a particular response with a particular stimulus constituted a *habit*. Behaviorists argued that habits were automatic. That is, they were performed spontaneously without awareness and were difficult to eradicate unless environmental changes led to the extinction of the stimuli upon they were built.



According to Behaviorism, a habit was formed when a particular stimulus became regularly linked with a particular response, and the stimulus was said to ‘elicit’ the response. That is, the presence of stimulus called forth a response. If the stimulus occurred sufficiently frequently, the response became practiced and therefore automatic. In the neo-behaviorism of Skinner a rather different account of how habits developed can be found. He played down the importance of stimulus, on the grounds that it was not always possible to state what stimulus was responsible for a particular response. He argued that it was the behaviour that followed a response which reinforced it and thus helped to strengthen the association. The learning of a habit, then, could occur through *imitation* (i.e. the learner copies the stimulus behavior sufficiently often for it to become automatic) or through *reinforcement* (i.e. the response of the learner is rewarded or punished depending on whether it is appropriate or otherwise, until only appropriate responses are given).

It was also believed that learning a foreign language could proceed in a similar way. Imitation and reinforcement were the means by which the learner identified the stimulus-response associations that constituted the habits of the FL (Ellis, 1999).

In other words, in addition to offering a general picture of FL as habit-formation, I will also explain why the FL learners make errors.

### 2.1.2 Errors

The interference errors are those caused by the influence of the learner’s mother tongue on his production of the target language in presumably those areas where the languages clearly differ.

According to behaviorist learning theory, old habits get in the way of learning new habits. It is interference. The notion of *interference* has a central place in behaviorist theory.

According to Ellis (1999) interference was the result of what was called *proactive inhibition*. This is concerned with the way in which previous learning prevents or inhibits the learning of new habits. Where the first language and foreign language share a meaning but express it in different ways (similar stimuli, different response), an error is likely to arise in the FL because the learner will transfer the realization device from her first language into the foreign. For example, a French speaker may express the idea of being cold (= meaning common to first and foreign language) as ‘I have cold’ in FL English, as a result of the way this meaning is expressed in L1 French, ‘j’ai froid’. Learning a FL involves developing new habits whether

the stimulus-response links of the FL differ from those of the L1. In order to develop these new habits, the learner has to overcome proactive inhibition.

Behaviorist learning theory predicts that *transfer* will take place from the first to the foreign language. Transfer will be *negative* when there is proactive inhibition. In this case errors will result. Thus, differences between the first and foreign language create learning difficulty which results in errors.

In behaviorist accounts of FL, errors were considered undesirable. They were evidence of non-learning, of the failure to overcome proactive inhibition. Some language teaching theorists believe that these challenges (errors and habits) are the principal challenges for foreign language learners.

## 2.2 Foreign Language and Mother Tongue Transfer

It is popular belief that foreign language is strongly influenced by the learner's first language (L1). It is also popular belief that the role of the L1 is a negative one. That is, the L1 gets in the way or interferes with the learning of foreign language (FL) such that features of the L1 are transferred into the FL (Ellis, 1999).

If in popular opinion the L1 interferes with the learning of the new language, what is the impact of native language in learning an FL? It will reveal considerable disagreement about how pervasive the L1 is in FL. On the one hand the popular belief is given support:

Taking a psychological point of view, we can say there is never peaceful co-existence between two language systems in the learner, but rather constant warfare, and that warfare is not limited to the moment of cognition, but continues during the period of storing newly learnt ideas in memory. (Marton, cited in Ellis 1999, p.150).

On the other hand, the popular belief is rejected and the impact of the L1, if not denied totally, is at least minimized:

... Our data on FL acquisition of syntactic structures in a natural environment suggest that interference does not constitute a major strategy in this area...it seems necessary to me to abandon the notion of interference as a natural and inevitable phenomenon in FL learning. (Felix cited in Ellis 1999, p.107).

Krashen cited in Ellis (1999) rejects the view that the first language interferes with FL. Rather, he sees the use of the first language as a performance strategy. The learner falls back on his first language using his first language when he lacks a rule in the FL. He initiates an utterance using his first language (instead of 'acquired' FL knowledge) and then substitutes FL lexical items, also making small repairs to the resulting string by means of the Monitor.

### **Summary**

In spite of different opinions I come to the conclusion that language learners begin relying on their ability to analogize, systematize, and regularize the target language data to which they are exposed immediately upon beginning to learn a language. However, they are also relying extensively on their native languages for support, and this increases the possibility of the use of old habits that will result in errors taking account the stimuli and response. For this reason, what are the main problems that Capeverdean students face taking account the similarity or difference from Creole into English? Is it producing similar stimulus or different responses from the students? To answer these questions I am going to do a contrastive analysis to compare Creole and English (grammar), identifying the problem of Capeverdean Students.

## CHAPTER III: COMPARING LANGUAGES

Using the mother tongue, we have learnt to think, learnt to communicate, and acquired an intuitive understanding of grammar. The mother tongue is therefore the greatest asset people bring to the task of foreign language learning and provides a language learning support system. As was said before the skills developed in learning the first language can be transferred to the second/foreign language learning. However, through contrastive analysis it is possible to identify the areas where this transfer may occur. The following sections deal with this issue.

### 3.1 Contrastive Analysis

According to Labo cited in Ellis (1999, p. 23), one of the prime movers of Contrastive Analysis, “the teacher who has made a *comparison of the foreign language with the native language* of the students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them”.

Contrastive Analysis has a psychological aspect and a linguistic aspect. The first is based on behaviorist learning theory, and the linguistic aspect, on structuralist linguistics.

#### 3.1.1 The Psychological aspect

According to Lee, cited in Ellis (1999), the Psychological aspect exists in a *strong* and a *weak* form. The strong form claims that all second language errors can be *predicted* by identifying the differences between the target language and the learner’s first language. As Lee, notes the prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error in foreign language is *interference* coming from the learner’s native language.

The *weak* form of the hypothesis claims only to be diagnostic. A Contrastive Analysis can be used to *identify* which errors are the results of *interference*. Ellis (1999) claims: “*Contrastive Analysis needs to work hand in hand with an Error Analysis. First actual errors must be identified by analyzing a corpus of learner language. Then a Contrastive Analysis can be used to establish which errors in the corpus can be put down to differences between the first and second language*” (p.24).

Ideally the psychological aspect of contrastive analysis should deal with the conditions under which *interference* takes place. That is, it should account for instances when linguistic

differences between the first language and second language lead to transfer errors and instances when they do not.

### 3.1.2 The Linguistic Aspect

Most of the contrastive studies carried out have been based on surface structure characteristics, such as those described by the structuralists. According to Ellis (1999) the procedure followed was: “(1) *description* (i.e. a formal description of the two languages is made); (2) *Selection* (i.e. certain items, which may be entire subsystems such as the auxiliary system or areas known through error analysis to present difficulty, are selected for comparison); (3) *comparison* (i.e. the identification of areas of difference and similarity); and (4) *Prediction* (i.e. identifying which areas are likely to cause errors).

In (3), *comparison*, the simplest procedure was to identify which aspects of the two languages were similar and which were different. However, contrastive analysis soon realized that there were *degrees* of similarity and difference. Here are some of the possibilities that a comparison can reveal:

- No difference between a feature of the first and second language.

E.g. the contracted form ‘j’ai’ in French is mirrored by the contracted form ‘I’ve’ in English.

- An item in the first language is absent in the target.

E.g. in German, subordinate clauses require a different word order from main clauses, whereas in English the word order is the same in both clause types.

- No similarity between first language feature and target language feature.

E.g. in Spanish, negation is preverbal (No se), whereas in English it is post verbal (I don’t know). In addition English negation involves the use of the auxiliary system, whereas Spanish negation does not.

- Divergent phenomena (i.e. one item in the first language becomes two items in the target language).

E.g. where the **L2** is French, English ‘the’ diverges into ‘le’ and ‘la’.

Taking into account that Creole and English have different and similar points, I am going to do a contrastive analysis between these two languages. This analysis will be based on *comparison*, and as we see before, it is a type of contrastive analysis, where we identify which areas of the two languages are similar and which are different. It will focus on specific grammar points: possessive adjectives/pronouns, personal pronouns, numbers, articles and verb tense (present, past, future) as recommended in the syllabus for 7<sup>o</sup> and 8<sup>o</sup> grades (See Appendix 1). Also, the different types of transfer that they can produce will be identified. It will show the differences and similarities between Creole and English language. This work will focus on the variety of Creole used in São Nicolau only.

I decided to do my research in Sao Nicolau because I am particularly interested in the language nuances of Sao Nicolau Creole. This added to the fact that I am originally from Sao Nicolau has developed my interest in looking at the Island specific interferences. It is also my plan to teach in Sao Nicolau upon the completion of my thesis. With this in mind, I would like to have a direct and participatory relationship with both, the students and teachers whom I will be working with in the future.

### 3.2 Possessive adjective/pronouns

According to Leech (2003) in English, possessive adjectives differ from possessive pronouns.

#### Possessive adjectives

my  
your  
his  
her  
its  
our  
your  
their

#### Possessive pronouns

mine  
yours  
his  
hers  
-  
ours  
yours  
theirs

The possessive adjectives occur before a noun.

E.g. **My** cup; Have you seen **my** tennis racket?

Possessive pronouns stand alone as a subject, object, etc.

E.g. This cup is **mine**; It is better than **yours**;

I'll take **mine**; You'll take **yours**

In Creole, according to Veiga (2002) the possessive adjective and pronouns are:

### Adjectives

**Nha** chávina é branku

**Bo** chávina é azul

**Se** chávina é prete

**Nos** chávina é grande

**Bezote** chávina é grande

**Ses** chávina é grande

### Pronouns

Es chávina branku é **de-meu/de-minha**

Es chávina azul é **de-bosa**

Es chávina prete é **de-seu**

Kes chávina **de-nossa** é grande

Kes chávina **de-bezote** é grande

Kes chavina **de-seus** é grande

In Creole, the possessive pronouns have no gender. The forms *de-meu*, *de-minha* (See Appendix 6) can be used with both genders. English has one word for the adjective, “*your*”, in the singular and in plural and “*yours*” for the pronoun – referring to one person or more than one person. In Creole there are two different forms for the adjective in the singular and plural and the same for the pronoun, as shown in the example below:

**Table 1: Possessive Pronouns**

	Creole		English	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Adjective	<b>Bo</b> kasa ê bnite.	<b>Bezote</b> kasa ê bnite.	<b>Your</b> house is beautiful.	<b>Your</b> houses are beautiful.
Pronoun	Es kasa bnite ê <b>de-bósa.</b>	Es kasa bnite ê <b>de-bosês.</b>	This beautiful house is <b>yours.</b>	These beautiful houses are <b>yours.</b>

## 3.3 Personal pronouns

In English as in Creole the personal pronouns are used when it is clear who or what is being talked about. They are very important: we cannot normally omit them. However, it is easy to find differences and similarities between Creole and English.

According to Veiga (2002) and Leech (2003) the personal pronouns are:

Singular		Plural	
Creole	English	Creole	English
N, mi	I	No	we
Bo, bosê	you,	Bezote, bosês	you
El	he, she, it	Es	they

Here we can expect positive transfer to occur when we talk about personal pronouns as object and subject. In both languages the object pronoun is placed after the verb. Therefore students should not have any problems in terms of learning the word order. Below is an example:

Creole	English
El da- <b>me</b> un livre	He/she gave <b>me</b> a book
El do- <b>be</b> /el da- <b>bosê</b> un livre	He/she gave <b>you</b> a book
El do- <b>ne</b> un livre	He/she gave <b>us</b> a book

One difference between Creole and English is in the use of the personal pronoun “you”. In English it is the same for both the singular and the plural, while in Creole there is one form for the singular and two for the plural, as shown in the sentences below.

<b>Singular:</b>	<b>Bo</b> kre kemê	<b>You</b> want to eat
<b>Plural:</b>	<b>Bezote/bosês</b> kre kemê	<b>You</b> want

In English the pronoun ‘you’ is used for formal and informal language but, in Creole the pronoun ‘bo’ is used for informal language and ‘bosê’ for formal language. Therefore, students may not have any difficulty in learning just one form.

Also, in English the pronouns ‘she’ and ‘he’ are used to distinguish female from male but, in Creole only one pronoun is used ‘el’ to refer to both female and male.

<b>El</b> kre	<b>he/she</b> wants
---------------	---------------------

The same happens with the pronoun ‘it’. In English, this pronoun is used to talk about things, not people. However, in Creole only one pronoun is used ‘el’ to talk about things and people.

### 3.4 Numbers

According to Veiga (2002), in Creole the ‘s’ is not usually pronounced in plural words. In English the “s” is the mark for regular plurals.

Creole		English	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Um kabra	Dôs kabra/txeu kabra	a goat	two goats, many goats
Um amigu	Dôs amigu	a friend	two friends, many friends



This can provoke negative transfer in spoken language, i.e., students tend not to pronounce the final “s” in English plural words. However, in written language this transfer may be positive if students use their background knowledge of Portuguese.

### 3.5 Articles

In English we find the definite article ‘*the*’. According to Leech (2003) it is used before common nouns, i.e., singular and plural countable or, in some cases, before uncountable nouns:

- Milk is my favourite drink; I like **the** milk they produce here;
- **The** girls who went to **the** beach are my friends;

Nevertheless, Creole does not have a definite article.

Regarding indefinite articles, English has two forms for the singular: *a* before a consonant sound and *an* before a vowel sound, and is not used with plural or uncountable nouns because ‘*a*’ means ‘*one*’. In Creole the indefinite article is not used before uncountable nouns. However, there is one form to be used before singular countable nouns and one before plural countable nouns: *un* and *uns*.

#### Creole:

- Un ome devê stóde senpre preperóde pa bem y pa mal;
- Uns ome é drete, otes é marióde;

#### English:

- An event is being prepared;
- A cat is in my house;

However, in Creole the indefinite articles ‘*un/uns*’ can be placed before a vowel or consonant sound and there is no gender. Both can be used with plural or singular nouns (Veiga, 2002).

<u>Un</u> algen	<u>uns</u> algen
<u>Un</u> kosa	<u>uns</u> kosa
<u>Un</u> ome	<u>uns</u> ome
<u>Un</u> amedjer	<u>uns</u> amedjer

Because Creole does not have definite articles, negative transfer may occur. Students may have some difficulties in learning the use of definite articles in English.

### 3.6 Verb Tenses

#### 3.6.1 Present Simple

In Creole the present simple tense has the same form for all subjects while in English the third person singular takes an “s” or “es”. The verb to be is the only verb with different forms (am, are, is). Below are some examples from Veiga (2002) and Leech (2003):

#### Simple Present Tense

##### Creole - Kemê

N ta kemê  
 Bo ta kumê  
 El ta kemê  
 No ta kemê  
 Bezote ta kemê  
 Es ta kemê

##### English – to eat

I eat  
 You eat  
 He/she eats  
 We eat  
 You eat  
 They eat

##### Creole – ser

Mi ê  
 Bo ê  
 El ê  
 Nos ê  
 Bezote ê  
 Es ê

##### English – to be

I am  
 You are  
 He/she/it is  
 We are  
 You are  
 They are

This may cause negative transfer.

#### 3.6.2 Past Simple

In English regular verbs add – ed, d, or t, to the stem to make the simple past form. Irregular verbs have a different form for the simple past. The same verb form is used for all the subjects in the past (the verb to be has two forms: was, were).

In Creole the verb form in the past tense is the same as the form for the present tense:

Table 2: verb forms for past simple

Creole	English	
	Regular verbs	Irregular verbs
Onte N <b>kemê</b> txeu.	Yesterday I <b>arrived</b> late.	Yesterday I <b>ate</b> a lot.
Onte bo <b>kemê</b> txeu.	Yesterday you <b>arrived</b> late.	Yesterday you <b>ate</b> a lot.
Onte el <b>kemê</b> txeu.	Yesterday he <b>arrived</b> late.	Yesterday he <b>ate</b> a lot.
Onte no <b>kemê</b> txeu.	Yesterday we <b>arrived</b> late.	Yesterday we <b>ate</b> a lot.
Onte bezote <b>kemê</b> txeu.	Yesterday you <b>arrived</b> late.	Yesterday you <b>ate</b> a lot.
Onte es <b>kemê</b> txeu.	Yesterday they <b>arrived</b> late.	Yesterday they <b>ate</b> a lot.

This is one of the areas where Capeverdean students may have some problems when they learn English.

### 3.6.3 The Future Tense

Below is a table showing verb forms for the future in Creole and English.

Table 3: verbs forms for future

Creole	English	
	Shall/will- future	Going to-future
Manhâ N ta ba <b>kemê</b> modje.	Tomorrow I shall arrive early.	Tomorrow I'm <b>going to eat</b> a lot of <i>modje</i> .
Manhâ bo ta ba <b>kemê</b> modje.	Tomorrow you will <b>arrive</b> early.	Tomorrow you're <b>going to eat</b> a lot of <i>modje</i> .
Manhâ el ta ba <b>kemê</b> modje.	Tomorrow he will <b>arrive</b> early.	Tomorrow he's <b>going to eat</b> a lot of <i>modje</i> .
Manhâ no ta ba <b>kemê</b> modje.	Tomorrow we will <b>arrive</b> early.	Tomorrow we're <b>going to eat</b> a lot of <i>modje</i> .
Manhâ bezote ta ba <b>kemê</b> modje.	Tomorrow you will <b>arrive</b> early.	Tomorrow you're <b>going to eat</b> a lot of <i>modje</i> .
Manhâ es ta ba <b>kemê</b> modje	Tomorrow they will <b>arrive</b> early.	Tomorrow they're <b>going to eat</b> a lot of <i>modje</i> .

In Creole, as in past simple no changes occur in the verb form from the present to the future.

### Summary

In this section I compared some structures of Creole and English taking into account some structures that are supposed to be taught at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades according to the official syllabus for ELT in Capeverdean secondary schools (See Appendix 1). The comparison shows that students may be influenced positively and negatively because it is possible to find similarities

and differences between these two languages. However, in the majority of the cases we saw that negative transfer may occur. In order to confirm this hypothesis I carried out some research to identify the problems that teachers and students face due to transfer of Creole grammar into English grammar at beginner level and how it affects the teaching and learning. The following Chapter presents this research.

## **CHAPTER IV: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 The ELT Context**

In order to understand how Capeverdean students and teachers face the problem of transfer from Creole into English, first it is necessary to understand the context in which the process of English language learning at Capeverdean secondary schools takes place.

#### **4.1.1 English Language Learning at Secondary Schools in Cape Verde**

English is considered to be a foreign language in Cape Verde. For this reason it is not normally used as a means of communication in everyday life. English is taught as a foreign language as an optional subject at secondary level. It may be chosen in the first cycle (seventh grade) and in the third cycle (eleventh grade).

The amount of hours per week can be seen in the following table:

**Table 4: amount of hours**

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Hours per week</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade	four hours per week
9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grade	three hours per week
11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade (Humanistic area)	four hours per week
11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade (Socio economic area)	three hours per week
11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade (Scientific area)	three hours per week
11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade (Arts area)	three hours per week

Capeverdean general education at secondary schools is divided into six grades (from grade 7 to 12: for children ages 11/12 to 18 (See Appendix 2).

### **4.2The Research**

#### **4.2.1 The Research Question and Objectives**

This research deals with the analysis of specific grammar points from the official syllabus (See Appendix 1), namely the use of definite and indefinite articles, plural and singular nouns, personal pronouns (subject and object), possessive adjectives and pronouns, and verb tenses (simple present, simple past and shall/will-future and going to-future). My research

question is “What is the impact of Creole on English language learning”? Therefore, the objectives of this study are the following:

- To identify how the mother tongue, i.e., Creole transfer impacts foreign language learning in terms of the structures mentioned above;
- To identify challenges that teachers and students face in teaching and learning English as a foreign language due to mother tongue transfer and
- To find out ways of overcoming those problems of transfer;

#### **4.2.2 The Target Population**

My research was carried out in S. Nicolau because it is my home island and I am more familiar with the variety of Creole of that island. The only High School in S. Nicolau, Baltazar High School, is located in two towns: Ribeira Brava and Tarrafal.

My target population consisted of all the 6 English teachers and students at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades from these two towns. Although the focus of my research was beginner levels, I decided to survey all the teachers owing to the reduced number and also to take advantage of their teaching experience.

#### **4.2.3 The Research Method**

In order to carry out my research I designed a questionnaire for teachers (See Appendix 3) and before applying it, I did a pilot-testing with English teachers at Baltazar High School and after this, based on the difficulties found by the teachers, I decided to make some modifications, not in terms of content, but concerning some words and clarify some questions. The questionnaire is divided into four sections:

- *Professional details*; the objective is to identify possible variables that influences teachers’ response.
- *The concept of language transfer*; in addition, the objective is to know if the teachers have an idea about transfer of first language into foreign language and if it affects the students’ learning.
- *Grammar (types of transfer)*; also, the objective is to identify the different types of transfer taking account the structure of English taught at beginner level.
- *Methodology of error correction*; the purpose is to identify the different ways teachers use to correct student’s mistake.

To collect more information, I went to Vila de Ribeira Brava, where the teachers provided me with some samples of students' tests. I also taught ten classes (4 of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 6 of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade). I asked the students to write some lines about their daily routine, about what they had done the day before and about their plans using will or going. I used the student's tests provided by the teachers and the sentences they wrote in my classes to analyse their errors and possible causes. Besides that I asked the students some questions about their difficulty in learning English. (See Appendix 5).

#### **4.2.4 Procedure for data collection**

I had to attend the teachers' coordination meeting for the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. In this way, I reached all the teachers at the same time, and this allowed me to have the total number of responses I expected.

I collected students' written work from the classes I taught and, as I said before, the teachers supported me with the students' written test they had.

### **4.3 Data Analysis**

#### **4.3.1 The Teacher's Questionnaire**

The data collected will be analyzed by comparing the information gathered from the questionnaire with the information gathered in the literature review, taking into account the research question: "What is the relationship between mother tongue transfer and learning English as a foreign language?"

The answers will analyze regarding each section. The teachers will be identified as teacher A, B, C, D, E, and F.

### **Section I:**

#### **Professional Details:**

Concerning academic qualifications, of the six teachers who responded the questionnaire, 4, i.e., 67% have a *Bacharelato* Degree (4 years in English Studies); 2, i.e., 33% have *Licenciatura* (4 years in English Studies); (See Appendix 5).

As regards to length of teaching or experience, 2, i.e. 33% have one year of teaching; 3, i.e. 50% have two years of teaching experience and 1, i.e., 17% have three years of experience.

Related to pedagogical training, 5, i.e., 83% have pedagogical training and 1, i.e., 17% do not have any kind of pedagogical training.

As we can see in the table below, among the teachers who responded the questionnaire, 5, i.e., 83% are teaching beginner/elementary levels.

**Table 4: Level currently teaching**

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Levels</b>
Teacher A	7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades
Teacher B	9 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades
Teacher C	7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grades
Teacher D	8 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , and 11 <sup>th</sup> grades
Teacher E	7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> grades
Teacher F	8 <sup>th</sup> grade

## **Section II:**

### **Question 1: What is your definition of “transfer in language learning”?**

Appendix 4 presents the teacher’s responses to the Questionnaire (See Appendix 4).

As can be seen from the teachers’ responses, all of them consider transfer as a cognitive process of transferring the knowledge acquired in the mother tongue as the basis for learning the target language. This definition is in accordance with the literature review:

According to Ellis (1999): “*Transfer is the process of using knowledge of the first language in learning a second language*” (See Chapter I).

### **Question 2: Do you think that Creole influences your students’ learning of English?**

All the teachers agree that Creole influences the learning of English. They focus on different language areas, such as vocabulary and pronunciation and spelling, but structure is a common area mentioned. The main reason presented for this influence is the fact that students first think in Creole and then try to translate their thoughts into English.

### **Question 2.B: If your answer was yes, do you think that influence is positive or negative?**

All the teachers inquired think that influence is negative. None of them mentioned one case of positive transfer. The reasons are nearly the same as those mentioned above. Since there is not a straightforward equivalence between words and structures of English and Creole,



students have to make mistakes. In order to cope with this some teachers (Teacher A, C and F) recommend that students should be given more opportunities to use the language.

### Section III:

In this section teachers were asked to give examples of their students' language transfer regarding possessive adjectives and pronouns, personal pronouns, articles, verb tenses and numbers.

**Table 6: Shows the teachers who answered this question and the areas they focused on.**

	<b>Possessive adjectives and pronouns</b>	<b>Personal pronouns</b>	<b>Articles</b>	<b>Verb tenses</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
<b>Teacher A</b>	Students confuse the use of possessive pronouns mine,yours, hers,his;	The use of he/she is a problem;	Errors in the use of <i>the</i> and <i>a/an/one</i> ;	The use of preent forms for all tenses;	Students do not pronounce s in plural words; irregular plural could be learnt with careful work;
<b>Teacher B</b>	-	The use of <i>me</i> instead of <i>I</i> ;	Use of <i>the</i> before proper names;	The use of present forms for all tenses; No use of <i>s</i> in the third person sing present tense;	In writing students use <u>s</u> even in cases of irregular plurals in English;
<b>Teacher C</b>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Teacher D</b>	Students cannot distinguish the use of <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> ;	The use of <i>me</i> instead of <i>I</i> ;	Errors in the use of <i>the</i> and <i>a/an/one</i> ;	The use of present forms for all tenses;	-
<b>Teacher E</b>	Students cannot distinguish the use of <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> ;		-	-	-
<b>Teacher F</b>	-	The use of <i>me</i> instead of <i>I</i> ;	-	The use of present forms for all tenses;	Students do not use <i>s</i> in plural words;

From the teachers' responses we can say that the use the possessive adjectives in the third person is a problem. Regarding personal pronouns the common error students make is in the confusion between the subject and object pronouns for the first person. The three teachers who referred to the use of articles acknowledge that the fact that Creole has no definite articles and just one form for the indefinite article makes it difficult for students to learn their

use in English. From the structures the teachers mention it is clear that the use verb tenses is the most problematic area and that the students tend to use only the present tense. Three of the teachers who answered the question agree that the pronunciation of final plural *s* is also a problem. It is also interesting to notice the overgeneralization of the use of *s* to make plural nouns.

From the teachers' examples it is possible to see that the mother tongue has a great influence in students' learning and it corresponds to what was said in the literature review. Despite of some positive transfer, this transfer in most cases is negative. Teachers also say that this influence is sometimes from Portuguese, which is the language of instruction and the official language of Cape Verde. Concerning the plural students' knowledge of Portuguese influences positively the learning of regular plurals in English. We may say that positive transfer occurs here. However, students tend to make overgeneralization of the rule and they apply it to other words in English (example: life - lifes; people - peoples).

## **Section IV:**

The purpose of the fourth and last section - Methodology of Error Correction - is to identify the different ways teachers use to correct students' mistakes.

The teachers were given some examples of techniques for error correction.

Most of the techniques used by the teachers are traditional ones (send students to board to correct the answers; write the correct answers on students paper) (See Appendix 4). Two teachers mentioned other more communicative techniques (games, dialogues elicitation).

### **4.3.2 Questions to Students and Written Work**

As was stated before, I collected student's written work and tests and I asked some questions to know their main difficulty in learning English as foreign language. These questions were:

- What do you think about learning English? It is helpful to you?
- What are the main difficulties you have in learning English?
- In which part of grammar do you have most difficulties? (See Appendix 5).

The students answered those questions orally.

They know that it is important to learn English but, the teaching is focused more on grammar, there is no space to communicate with the teacher in and outside the classroom. When they

want to say something, they do not find the words to express themselves they go back to Creole, because it is impossible to create a whole sentence correctly. Grammar causes more difficulties in learning English. Regarding this, verb tense cause most trouble.

As I said before I also taught some classes and analysed students' written products for negative transfer in the areas of grammar. Next I will present some errors I identified in their work.

### Possessive adjectives and pronouns

The use of **his** instead of **her** or vice-versa. This may be due to the fact that the possessive adjective/pronoun does not change in Creole according to gender.

Examples:

*Suzana is at home. **She** is doing **his** homework.*

*My best friend is Silvano. **Her** father is a teacher.*

### Personal pronouns

The use of *he* instead of *she*. This is probably because the same subject is used in Creole for both genders.

Example:

*My best friend is Pedro. **She** lives in Tarrafal.*

The use of *her* instead of *she* and *him* instead of *he*.

- ***Her** is my best friend* instead of ***She** is my best friend*;
- ***Him** stays at home* instead of ***He** stays at home*;

The pronoun subject after a preposition:

*Football is the best game for **he**,* instead of *Football is the best game for **him**.*

Is this a case of transfer from Portuguese *ele/ela* that can be used either as a subject or object after a preposition?

### Articles

#### a) Definite Article

Students also tend to use the definite article "*the*" before possessive pronouns:

*The my best friend is a Sandra,* instead of *My best friend is Sandra*;

In the sentence above students do not only use indefinite article before possessive adjective but, also use a word that looks like indefinite article in English but in fact it is the translation of the Portuguese definite article "*a*".

Students also wrote:

*She is daughter of Francisco*, instead of *She is the daughter of Francisco*.

No article because of Creole, but in the following sentence the article is used because of Portuguese and omitted because of Creole.

*I help **the** my mother with housework*, instead of *I help my mother with **the** house work*.

#### **b) Indefinite article**

Concerning the indefinite article I identified the use of a Creole word in an English sentence:

- I like she because is un people very good (Creole);
- I like her because she is a good person (English);

#### **Verbs:**

##### **a) Tenses**

Concerning the use of verb tenses the following paragraph illustrates the use of the present instead of the past:

*“In last weekend I enjoy my self, I go to visit my sister, I help my mother in house work and I study a lot. I watch television on Saturday night. Some cousins visit me, we listen to music. On Sunday, I clean my room and after I study a lot. I do not go to disco with friends because Monday I have school. At none o’clock I go to bed”.*

##### **b) Simple Present –Third person singular**

Here we have some examples:

*She like play soccer and volley ball*, instead of *She likes playing soccer and volley ball*;

*She like dance music Hip Pop*, instead of *She likes dancing Hip Pop music*;

*She like katxupa* instead of *She likes katxupa*;

*She study every day* instead of *She studies every day*;

#### **Singular and Plural Nouns**

##### **Students wrote:**

*Childs* instead of *children*, *mouses* instead of *mice*, *mans* instead of *men*, *foots* instead of *feet*.

No errors were noticed concerning regular plurals.

### **Summary:**

From this study it is possible to see that despite of some similarities between the structures of English and Creole, this language has a negative impact on teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The common errors mentioned by the teachers in the survey are the same as those identified in the analysis of student's written products concerning possessive adjectives and pronouns, personal pronouns, verb tenses, articles and numbers (singular and plural). This confirms the hypotheses made in Chapter III in the contrastive analysis of some structures of Creole and English. In the literature review we saw that when students pick up their old habits, old knowledge from the MT and they transfer it to the foreign language, the language produced may be a wrong sample of language, which may make teaching more difficult.

As a word of conclusion of this study and in order to answer the research question set at the beginning of "*What is the impact of the mother tongue on learning English as a foreign language?*", I would say that in terms of learning the structures that were the object of this study, the mother tongue, in this case, Creole exerts a negative influence. Both teachers and students agree that it is difficult to teach and learn English under these circumstances and some teachers suggest some teaching techniques and strategies that may help overcome these difficulties.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of the mother tongue on the learner's acquisition and performance of the target language. I tried to describe, analyze, and explain the errors made by low level students in their written work in the light of some theories of language acquisition and language transfer. The examination of those errors reveals incorrect samples of the target language produced by the students.

Students transfer what they know in the mother tongue into English language. When students pick up what they know in the native language and transfer it into the foreign language, at the same time old habits are transferred. This is called language transfer.

This transfer can be positive or negative depending of similarities and differences between these two languages. The results of this study show that the impact of Creole is more negative than positive despite of some similarities. At beginner level students have problems about identifying and understand the different structures of English so, they use the Creole's structure while writing in English. This happens because it is their first contact with English, and they are confronted with something new.

In the first chapters I discussed the factors accounting for language transfer as presented by several authors. The following variables were established in relation to language transfer:

- The more thoroughly something is learned, the more likely it is to be transferred to a new situation
- The more similar two situations are, the more likely it is that what is learned in one situation will be applied to the other situation
- Numerous and varied examples and opportunities for practice increase the extent to which information and skills will be applied in the new situations.

(Cheng at al., 1986; Cormier, 1987 cited in Ormrod, 1990).

The results of my research are in accordance with the variables mentioned above. Keeping these variables in mind and on the basis on the findings of my research, I would like to make the following suggestions and recommendations:

Firstly, teachers should encourage students to use authentic material. This will help them to be closer to English outside and inside the class because: This type of material can be found

anywhere. Teachers can encourage students to listen to the radio, to songs, use the computer, internet, read magazines, travel brochures, newspaper, watch TV, films, etc.

I would also suggest that teachers speak English for the majority of the time in the classroom, because it helps students to be familiar with the new language and it motivates them to think, to speak and it is an open door to developing good writing skills. Instead of using Portuguese or Creole as the medium of instruction in the classroom, teachers should use English and appropriate teaching techniques for explanations.

Teachers can use contrastive analysis between Creole and English taking into account the subject that they are going to teach, identifying the similarities and differences in the subject taught. In this way classroom practice could be directed to the problem which helps teachers and students to be aware of possible negative transfer, because they will know what differs from Creole and English.

Also, teachers can discuss with students the subjects that the students believe that may cause trouble and will result in negative transfer.

Teachers should encourage students to speak and write in English and go around the class given support to students when they are writing, making clear that the subject and the structure are correct.

In addition, I recommend further studies, on a large scale, focusing not only on all the structural items to be taught but also on vocabulary and syntax.

Finally, I would like to say that it was hard for me to work on this topic, which was totally new to me. However, I decided to work on it given its relevance for the teaching of English in Cape Verde. I am aware that the scope of my research is limited, but I decided to focus on specific structures only because, from my teaching experience those are the most problematic teaching points at lower levels. This study is just the beginning of a more comprehensive project that I intend to develop in the future.

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**Appendix 1 – Syllabus for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades**

**Appendix 1 (Continued)**

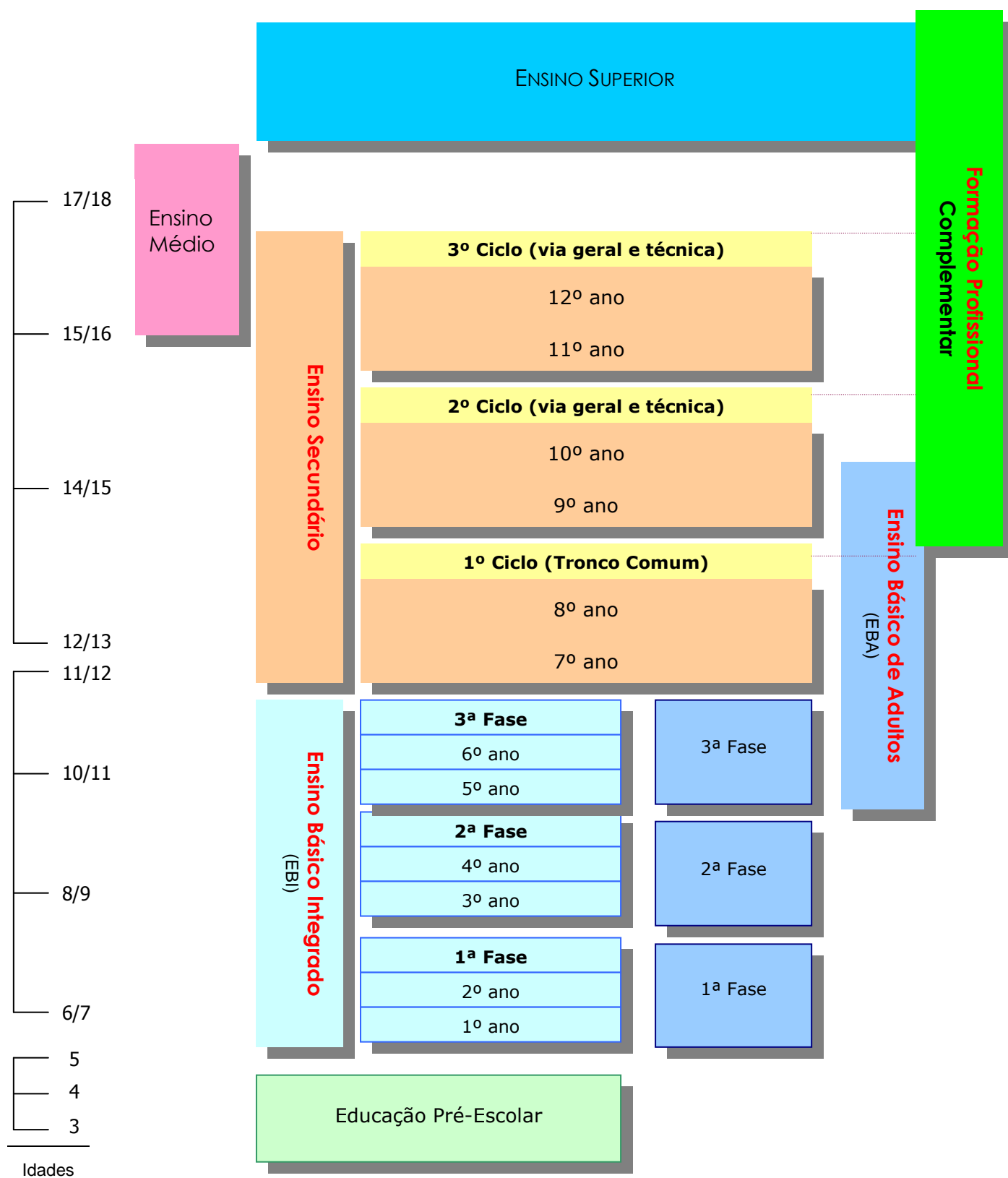
**Appendix 1 (Continued)**

**Appendix 1 (Continued)**

**Appendix 1 (Continued)**

**Appendix 1 (Continued)**

## Appendix 2 - Capeverdean Educational System – 2001



*Elaboração: GEP-SIGE/PROMET*

### Appendix 3 – Teachers’ Questionnaire

As a partial fulfillment of my request for my degree at ISE, I am researching the impact of mother tongue on teaching English as a foreign language at beginner levels and this research includes this questionnaire.

This questionnaire aims to find out your attitude toward transfer of mother tongue (Creole) into learning English as a foreign language. Your answers will be used for research purposes only, and they will be very useful for me to answer my thesis question. This questionnaire will be anonymous.

#### Section I:

**Please complete the following:**

Academic qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

Level you are currently teaching \_\_\_\_\_

Experience \_\_\_\_\_

Any pedagogical training? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section II: The Concept of Language Transfer

**1. What is your definition of “transfer in language learning”? Please write a few words:**

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**2. A) Do you think that Creole influences your students’ learning of English?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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**b) If your answer was yes, do you think that influence is positive or negative? Tick one:**

Positive \_\_\_\_\_

Negative \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Section III: Grammar (types of transfer)**

**Question 1: Please give examples of your students' language transfer regarding the following: possessive adjectives and pronouns, personal pronouns, articles, verb tenses and numbers**

➤ Possessive adjectives / possessive pronouns

Give examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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➤ Personal pronouns

Give examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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➤ Articles

Give examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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➤ Verb tenses

Give examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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➤ Numbers (singular and plural) house \_ houses

Give examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Section IV: Methodology of error correction

**1. How do you deal with such influence from Creole? Please tick as you fell appropriate:**

- a. You put the correct answers immediately on their paper\_\_\_\_\_
- b. You don't know how to correct those mistakes\_\_\_\_\_
- c. After writing their work you use flipchart with examples to correct their mistakes\_\_\_\_\_
- d. You send students to the board to write their own sentences correcting their mistakes \_\_\_\_\_
- e. You ask students to write something about the new topic at home and bring it to you avoiding mistakes you have called attention \_\_\_\_\_

Other\_\_\_\_\_

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**Thank you for your collaboration.**

## Appendix 4: Teachers' Responses to Questionnaire

### Section I: Professional Details:

	Academic Qualification	Level of Teaching	Experience	Pedagogical Training
Teacher A	Bachelor	1,2	Two years	Two months
Teacher B	Bachelor	3, 6	One year	-
Teacher C	Licenciatura	1,2,3,4	One year	At ISE
Teacher D	Bachelor	2,4,5	Two years	Two months
Teacher E	Bachelor	1,2,3	There years	No
Teacher F	Licenciatura	2	Two years	At ISE

### Section II: The Concept of Grammar

1. What is your definition of “transfer in language learning”? Please write a few words:

Teacher ‘A’: *“I think transfer in language learning can be thought as what happens when a student takes what they know about one language and applies it in their learning of another. For instance in Portuguese I can leave out subject pronouns, so I probably can in English too”.*

Teacher ‘B’: *“Transfer means the influence of students’ mother tongue in the students’ new language learning”.*

Teacher ‘C’: *“Transfer is a cognitive process that students use in order to get the understanding of a teacher explanation, message or information which is taught in a foreign language so, students use their mother tongue to achieve the meaning of the information”.*

Teacher ‘D’: *“Transfer in language learning refers to the way students carry the structure of a native language into a second language”.*

Teacher ‘E’: *“In my opinion transfer in language learning means translating a language into another language that the learner of the new language would understand”.*

Teacher ‘F’: *“ I think it is the need that students have to use their native language as the basis to understand the target language, that is, students tend to transfer the structure of their native language (Creole) into English which many times results in grammatical errors”.*

## 2. A) Do you think that Creole influences your students' learning of English?

Teacher "A": *"Creole does not demand the case of many grammatical nuances or even exact spelling. Much of Creole is contextual. This presents problems, when students try to learn and adapt to the precision and rules of English"*.

Teacher "B": *"The influence happens in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar"*.

Teacher "C": *"My students try to write something in English but, when they find problems they prefer to use Creole. It is used to communicate too"*.

Teacher "D": *"The structure and relative complexity of English and Creole are quite different. Students have many problems with English grammar"*.

Teacher "E": *"Sentences are translated from Creole to English the same way they are in Creole. As a result of this, they make so many mistakes in their sentences"*.

Teacher "F": *"Creole influences students learning of English. The students tend to think first in their native language, then to translate it into English before speaking and writing"*.

### b) If your answer was yes, do you think that influence is positive or negative?

Teacher "A": *"It is negative because Creole is not a very demanding language. Also, students rarely encounter written Creole and therefore rarely read. They are accustomed to a simple, nearly 100% language. English is neither of these"*.

Teacher "B": *"It is negative because Creole can make students feel confused. It may not be good for them to associate grammar, vocabulary and other points from Creole to English"*.

Teacher "C": *"Students instead of using the English language inside the classroom they use Creole language. They lose opportunities to practice and to improve their English because certainly their English teacher would help them to correct their mistakes. Instead of trying to practice and to improve their communication in the foreign language they are using the easiest way of interaction and communication inside their classroom"*.

Teacher "D": *"It happens because students have a difficult time understanding and using English grammar that does not have an equivalent in Creole. It becomes difficult to teach English. Mistakes have to do with grammatical differences that do not easily translate between languages. Students have a difficult time translating both meaning and structure"*.

Teacher “E”: *“It is negative in the sense that sentences cannot be translated word for word. For example, in English language we say – his mother, but in Creole we say – a sua mãe. English books looks at the possessor but Creole looks at the possessed”.*

Teacher “F”: *“The influence is negative because students bring the structure of their native language into English and the two languages, has very distinct structures. If students were able to think in English it will be easier for them to learn the language so, is not easy to teach English as a foreign language. If learners could avoid creating sentences and ideas in Creole before translating them into English it would be much more helpful for the teachers”.*

### **Section III: Grammar (Types of Transfer)**

#### **1. In which part of grammar do learners transfer from Creole into English?**

##### **Possessive Adjectives:**

Teacher “A”: *“Possessive adjectives (my, your, her, his...) present many problems, but often Portuguese is more to blame due to its focus on the gender of the object instead of the subject. Creole simply does not differentiate which is easier to deal with. Possessive pronouns (mine, yours, hers, his...) are also complicated because they do not exist in the same way”.*

Teacher “D”: *“Gender is a constant problem. If a noun is generally feminine (where gender is acknowledged in Creole), the pronoun is translated as ‘her’ even if the subject is masculine”.*

For teacher “E”: *“Students are having problem with this. For example, with possessive adjectives: seus irmãos means both his brothers and her brothers”.*

##### **Personal Pronouns:**

Teacher “A”: *“Personal pronouns are generally problematic in the third person (she, and he), students often confuse these, perhaps due to Creole’s use of ‘el’ to describe them”.*

Teacher “B”: *“I have noticed students saying ‘me’ instead of ‘I’”.*

Teacher “F”: *“Mi é Carlos (Creole) – me is Carlos (English)”.*

##### **Articles:**

Teacher “A”: *“Creole does not use definite article, which complicates the teaching of ‘the’. Also the indefinite article ‘um’ is used in Creole where in English we would say ‘a/an/one’. Despite this Portuguese, I think Portuguese is the more significant trouble maker for this topic”.*

Teacher “B”: *“The Julian instead of Julian”.*

Teacher “D”: *“A constant problem mostly due to the fact that Creole does not have definite article. Students do not know how to translate the indefinite article ‘un’ (Creole) which is non-specified into English articles, the use of which can be difficult”.*

### **Verb Tenses:**

Teacher “A”: *“Students often forget to change tenses, and simply put everything in the simple present. This could be due to Creole’s tendency to do the same or because they do not study”.*

Teacher “B”: *“Students do not add ‘s’ to the third person in the present and they tend to write only in present tense. Students usually write: ‘she write, he play’. The correct form would be ‘she watches, he plays’ in present tense”.*

Teacher “D”: *“Students almost never remember to use tenses others than the present; this makes English in which the differences are clear (as in any formal written languages), a bit difficult”.*

Teacher “F”:

- *Ont e n bai pa Tarrafal (Creole past simple).*
- *Melhor bó bai pa kása (Creole imperative).*

*The verb “bai” did not change.*

- *Ont e n (subject) bai (verb) pa Tarrafal.*
- *Yesterday I(subject) go (verb) to Tarrafal.*

*The verbs “go” changes to went in English.*

### **Numbers:**

Teacher “A”: *“Numbers specifically are not a problem (other than spelling). Students often forget to form the plural of irregular nouns (child – children), but I believes it is lack of studying and working carefully as opposed to an influence of Creole”.*

Teacher “B”: *“As Creole does not have many words in plural, and is used a noun that expresses quantity so, students tend not to use plural too. When they do, they only add ‘s’ to the word. For example: ‘life – lifes (lives); people – peoples (people)”.*

Teacher “F”:

- *El tem cinku gatu (Creole); students tend to write:*
- *He/she has five cat (English);*

## Section IV: Methodology of Error Correction

### 3. How do you deal with such influence from Creole?

Teacher “A”:

- Put the correct answers immediately on their paper;
- Send students to the board to write their own sentences correcting their mistakes;
- Ask students to write something about the new topic at home and bring it to you avoiding mistakes you have called attention;

Teacher “C”:

- After writing their work you use flipchart with examples to correct their mistakes;

Teacher “D”:

- Put the correct answers immediately on their paper;
- Send students to the board to write their own sentences correcting their mistakes;
- Ask students to write something about the new topic at home and bring it to you avoiding mistakes you have called attention;

Teacher “E”:

- Put the correct answers immediately on their paper;
- Send students to the board to write their own sentences correcting their mistakes;

Teacher “F”:

- Send students to the board to write their own sentences correcting their mistakes;
- Ask students to write something about the new topic at home and bring it to you avoiding mistakes you have called attention;

**Others:**

Teacher “A”: *“I determine which part of grammar point is causing trouble and conduct a targeted class or half-class at that specific topic. They do a lot of practice with students writing everything on the board. If the lesson is conducive to it, they then try a more interesting activity like game, dialogue and so on, to reinforce the concept”.*

Teacher “F”: *“I elicit from students what they exactly want to write and help them build the correct sentence using the idea they have in mind focusing in a correct grammar”.*

### **Appendix 5 - Questions to Students**

- What do you think about learning English? It is helpful to you?
- What are the main difficulties you have in learning English?
- In which part of grammar do you have most difficulties?



## **APPENDIX 6**

### **ALLUPEC**